

JOE DONNELLY
INDIANA

SUITE 720
HART BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-1406
(202) 224-4814

COMMITTEE ON
AGRICULTURE, NUTRITION, AND FORESTRY
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United States Senate

June 20, 2017

The Honorable David J. Shulkin
Secretary
Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Ave NW
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Secretary Shulkin:

I am writing to express my concern regarding proposed cuts to the Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) Individual Unemployability program in President Trump's fiscal year (FY) 2018 budget request.

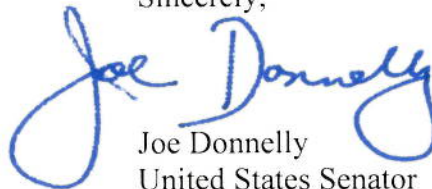
As you know, the Individual Unemployability program provides compensation to certain disabled veterans who are unable to work and have a significant service-connected disability. In the VA's FY18 budget, President Trump asked Congress to terminate Individual Unemployability benefits for veterans who are eligible for Social Security retirement benefits. This change could impact tens of thousands of veterans across the United States who rely on Individual Unemployability payments to get by each month.

Veterans have planned and budgeted for this income, and terminating it with little notice and less consideration for what they sacrificed in becoming eligible would be profoundly unjust. Furthermore, I am deeply concerned that the loss of these benefits would push more veterans into poverty and homelessness, exacerbating stressors that we know contribute to suicide risk.

I share your view that we must be responsible stewards of taxpayer dollars. There is no question that the VA has room to improve on increasing efficiency and eliminating waste. However, I firmly believe that providing financial support to deserving veterans who have sustained significant disabilities in the course of serving our nation is an appropriate use of federal funds.

As the Senate continues work on FY18 budget and appropriations legislation, I hope we can work together to reverse these proposed cuts and keep our promise to America's veterans. Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Joe Donnelly
United States Senator